

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2017

Agenda Item: Right-Of-Way Expansion Through Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area (R1)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

Background

Ninepipe is a 4,000-acre wildlife management area south of Ronan and lies within the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation. The WMA is managed primarily for waterfowl and upland game but many species, including grizzly bears and migratory birds utilize the property. MDT is planning a reconstruction project to widen the highway and construct a bike path along the highway. The highway and bike path would encroach upon Ninepipe WMA, requiring FWP to convey approximately four acres of property, including some wetland habitat, to MDT.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Upon Commission endorsement, FWP would work with MDT to prepare an environmental assessment for public review and comment. The public has already had several opportunities to participate in and comment on the reconstruction project during the planning process conducted by MDT. However, the total extent of the project and potential impact to Ninepipe was not evaluated in detail. MDT prepared an EIS on the project and a record of decision was completed in 2008. MDT has also worked with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe on the highway plans and adjusted the highway design based on their comments and comments from the public.

Alternatives and Analysis

The Department would consider two alternatives. The No Action alternative would result in the Department not conveying approximately four acres of Ninepipe WMA property to MDT for widening and realigning Highway 93, and adding a bike path. The Proposed Alternative would be to convey this property to MDT for those purposes.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends the Commission endorse the proposal by the Department to evaluate the conveyance of property to MDT, which would include a MEPA analysis and public review process.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission authorize the Department to proceed with an analysis of impacts for disposing of land from Ninepipe WMA as part of the Highway 93 reconstruction project.